Collaborative versus Technocratic Policymaking:

California's Statewide Water Plan

Ariel Ambruster and

William D. Leach

Outline of Today's Talk

- Water Plan and its history
- Our research
- 2005 process and its challenges
- 2005 process innovations

The California Water Plan

- First published in 1957 by state Department of Water Resources
- Updates about every 5 years
- Updates ID predicted gap between future supply, demand
- Typical update informational, data-based

1990s Water Plan Update Planning Process

- Prepared by DWR engineers
- Advisory committee provides input
- Advisory committee does not influence planning process

Fallout from 1998 Water Plan Update

- Water Plan methodology attacked at state, federal CALFED hearings
- Advisory Committee names removed from printed update

Result: Collaborative 2005 Water Plan Update Process

- 65-member Advisory Committee
- Drawn from broad cross-section of interests, including environmental justice and tribes
- DWR open to revamping entire planning process

Our Research

- Compare outcomes of 1998 and 2005 planning processes
- Develop narratives of each process
- Interviewed 24 Advisory Committee members, DWR staff, facilitators
- Reviewed written record

2005 Water Plan Process Challenges

- Breadth
- Deadlines
- Size
- Politics
- DWR Culture

Challenge: Breadth

- An advance planning process: very open ended, multiple approaches
- DWR's openness to Advisory Committee suggestions
- Results:
  - Trust
  - Lack of focus
  - Failure to meet deadlines

Challenge: Deadlines

- No time for pre-assessment
- Assumptions & Estimates report due January 2001
- California Water Plan Update due December 2003
- Results:
  - High risk for facilitators
  - Deadlines missed
  - Postponed modeling

Challenge: Size

- 65 members
- Results:
  - Reduced opportunities for developing relationships, deepening debate
  - Stakeholders valued smaller-group interactions

Challenge: Politics

- Davis admin leaked election-eve draft
- Schwarzenegger admin put out draft Highlights playing up selected policies
- Results:
  - In both cases, facilitators scrambled to assuage angry stakeholders

Challenge: DWR Culture

- Planners shielded from public
- Focus on data over people skills
- Results:
  - Some developed new skills, embraced process
  - Others will move elsewhere

Despite the Challenges

The collaborative process and DWR's openness produced a dramatically different document

2005 Update Innovations

- From informational document to strategic plan
- The present: actual data; normal, wet and dry years
- The future: multiple scenarios
- Emphasizes integrated resource planning
- Policy recommendations include:
  - Climate change
  - Water quality
  - Habitat restoration
  - Tribal issues
  - Environmental justice